

# Ground Water Rule Update

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The promulgation (signing into law) of the EPA Ground Water Rule (GWR) in November of last year has brought closure to many years of speculation on what the rule would require. The purpose of the GWR is to provide increased protection against microbial pathogens in public water systems that use ground water. This increased protection works several ways and is similar to the multiple barrier approach used in surface water treatment plants.

## **Source Monitoring**

The first barrier is source monitoring. Without going into too much detail here, ground water systems will have to monitor their source (well) if there is a total coliform positive sample in the distribution system. Another source protection is that systems that use an aquifer susceptible to contamination may have to monitor their source even if they don't have a total coliform positive in the distribution system.

## **Compliance Monitoring**

The next barrier is regular compliance monitoring. For those systems that add a disinfectant, routine monitoring will be required. Any system that serves more than 3,300 people will have to have a continuous analyzer, and systems serving less than 3,300 will have to have a daily grab sample. This will probably lead to a significant investment for several of our water systems.

## **Sanitary Surveys**

Regular sanitary surveys are also going to be required under the GWR. While DHEC already performs sanitary surveys for all public water systems, the rule requires us to identify significant deficiencies in one of eight different areas. Those areas are source, treatment, distribution, storage, pumping, monitoring & reporting, system O&M, and any State requirements in addition to the federal survey requirements. You can expect to hear more about this as the compliance deadline nears.

## **Corrective Action**

One of the last barriers identified with this rule is what happens when a problem is discovered. When a significant deficiency is identified on a survey, action is required of the water system and there are several choices to make. If able, the system can correct the significant deficiency and/or eliminate the source of contamination. If the deficiency can't be corrected or the source of contamination can't be eliminated, the system must either provide disinfection or use an alternative source.

This article is meant as an overview of the rule and I encourage each of you to read more about it on the EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater>. Also, you should make an effort to attend any meetings or workshops sponsored by the WEASC and other organizations working to get the word out on this and other regulations. In closing, let's keep in mind the purpose of the rule is increased public health protection. If you have any questions about this or any other drinking water regulation, feel free to contact Rich Welch at [welchra@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:welchra@dhec.sc.gov), or by phone at (803) 898-3546.